

SPORTS

Rumors fly as 'silly season' revs u

■ One rumor has Fittipaldi rejoining Patrick Racing to make it a two-car team in 1996. Another has Tracy heading back to Team Penske.

By MIKE PRYSON
ANN ARBOR NEWS BUREAU

"Silly season" is alive and well at Michigan International Speedway.

Silly season is that time of the IndyCar year when the rumor mills start working overtime. That rumor mill is in rare form this weekend.

Two of the hotter rumors making the rounds Friday involved Jackson car owner U.E. "Pat" Patrick. If you believe some of the talk around the water cooler, Emerson Fittipaldi will rejoin former boss Patrick to make Patrick Racing a two-car team in 1996.

Take the rumor one step further and Pat-

MARLBORO 500 NOTES

rick Racing drivers will turn in their Ford Cosworth powerplants in exchange for Honda-powered chassis in 1996.

Not so fast, says Patrick, who has driver Scott Pruett under contract next season.

Fittipaldi has one year left on his contract with Roger Penske.

"We've been approached by several people, several big names, I guess, who would like to see us run a second car," Patrick said. "But when you get two cars, you just double the problems."

Patrick said 1996 deals between drivers and owners usually start coming together

around Sept. 1. Patrick said that while he is not yet in a position to name names about any possible second driver for Patrick Racing, talk is on-going.

"The deal we're talking about, one guy isn't even in IndyCar racing right now who wants to work with us. Another driver has an international reputation. We've just got to figure out whether or not we want to take on all the problems. When you get a big name, a recognized star, you can have problems."

Patrick ran as many as three cars in a season on the circuit as recently as 1983, when Gordon Johncock, Danny Ongais and Chip Ganassi ran at Michigan.

"I don't even want to remember those days," Patrick said. "We got through it. But I don't want to do that again."

As for engine programs for Patrick Racing, Honda confirmed that it plans to run

probably six cars next season.

"We're talking to teams now and we'd like to have some decisions in the next week or two as to which teams will be using our engine," said Tom Elliott, president of Honda Performance Development Inc. "There's more demand right now than there is supply."

Another juicy rumor is that Newman-Haas driver Paul Tracy is headed back to Team Penske, where he raced the past three seasons.

Car owner Roger Penske holds Tracy's contract option for the 1996 season. Team Penske is expected to remain a two-car team next year. Stay tuned.

OVAL FIXATION: The repaved oval at MIS received rave reviews from drivers on Friday. Eddie Cheever was one of the first drivers to offer insight on the resurfaced two-mile oval. "It's black," he said. "It's got

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